



SRGC

# Bulb Log Diary

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BULB LOG 47.....20<sup>th</sup> November 2019



*Betula utilis* var *jacquemontii*



This week I am focusing on some of the trees in the garden such as the Himalayan White Birch, *Betula utilis* var *jacquemontii*, featured on the cover. For much of the year our attention is drawn to the colour provided by the ground level plantings of bulbs and herbaceous plants but at this time of year and throughout the winter it is the trees that grab my attention.

I am as enthusiastic about growing trees from seed as I am in growing the bulbs and other plants but we are limited in the space we have to plant these larger subjects - however that has not stopped me planting a significant number of trees for the size of our garden. If I left them to their own devices the trees would soon form a complete canopy of leaves shading out the beds to the detriment of the other plants so I need to manage the growth of the canopy

When they have shed their leaves I can see their structure and I can thin out the branches to keep the canopy open while retaining the natural shape of the tree. Previously this involved me climbing up the trees with ladders to reach the branches to be cut. On a recent visit to a garden in Ireland I was shown a wonderful telescopic pole pruning saw and lopper that has three sections, with a reach that can extend from 2.44m out to 6.3m. The picture above shows the reach with just two of the sections extended



The Silky Hayauchi Pole Saw comes with the saw blade attachment, a razor sharp blade which cuts through substantial branches with ease; it is a Japanese style saw so the cut is on the downward pull. I also got the lopper attachment to thin and prune back the smaller branches – it has a lever action operated by a rope and it cuts through reasonably sized branches cleanly and easily. It was not cheap as it is a professional bit of kit but I am already delighted with what it will allow me to do from the ground.





I have made a start by lopping the smaller crossing branches to open the structure then I will switch to the saw to remove a few of the bigger spreading branches to keep a more upright shape to the tree.



There are seed heads all along the twiggy growths on the branches which have been providing a food supply for birds. The number of seeds suggests if we did not remove the tree seedlings that germinate the garden would soon become a forest.



**Cotoneaster**

As well as bringing colourful decoration the berries also provide a valuable food source to the birds such as the many migrants like the Redwings, Fieldfares and Waxwings that arrive in massive numbers around this time of year.



**Redwing, *Turdus iliacus***

Large numbers of these birds visit the garden to feed on the berries, starting with the Sorbus then moving on to the Cotoneaster. This bird was driven into our window at some speed by a Sparrow Hawk; luckily it was only stunned and flew away again after I placed in the safety of one of the bulb houses for a short recovery time.



***Sorbus hupehensis***

The following sequence of images show some of the trees and how they create the garden landscape which changes as you walk through the different areas.





The trees and shrubs create partitions blocking your view in some areas then opening up a vista in others.





**Acer japonicum**



**Troughs and trees.**



Bonsai trees are easier to prune and I do not need to use a ladder or the pole saw!



As they start to turn colour the leaves on the seed-raised *Acer japonicum* shine out in the gloomy weather.





Below the taller trees, rhododendrons and conifers add to the structure.

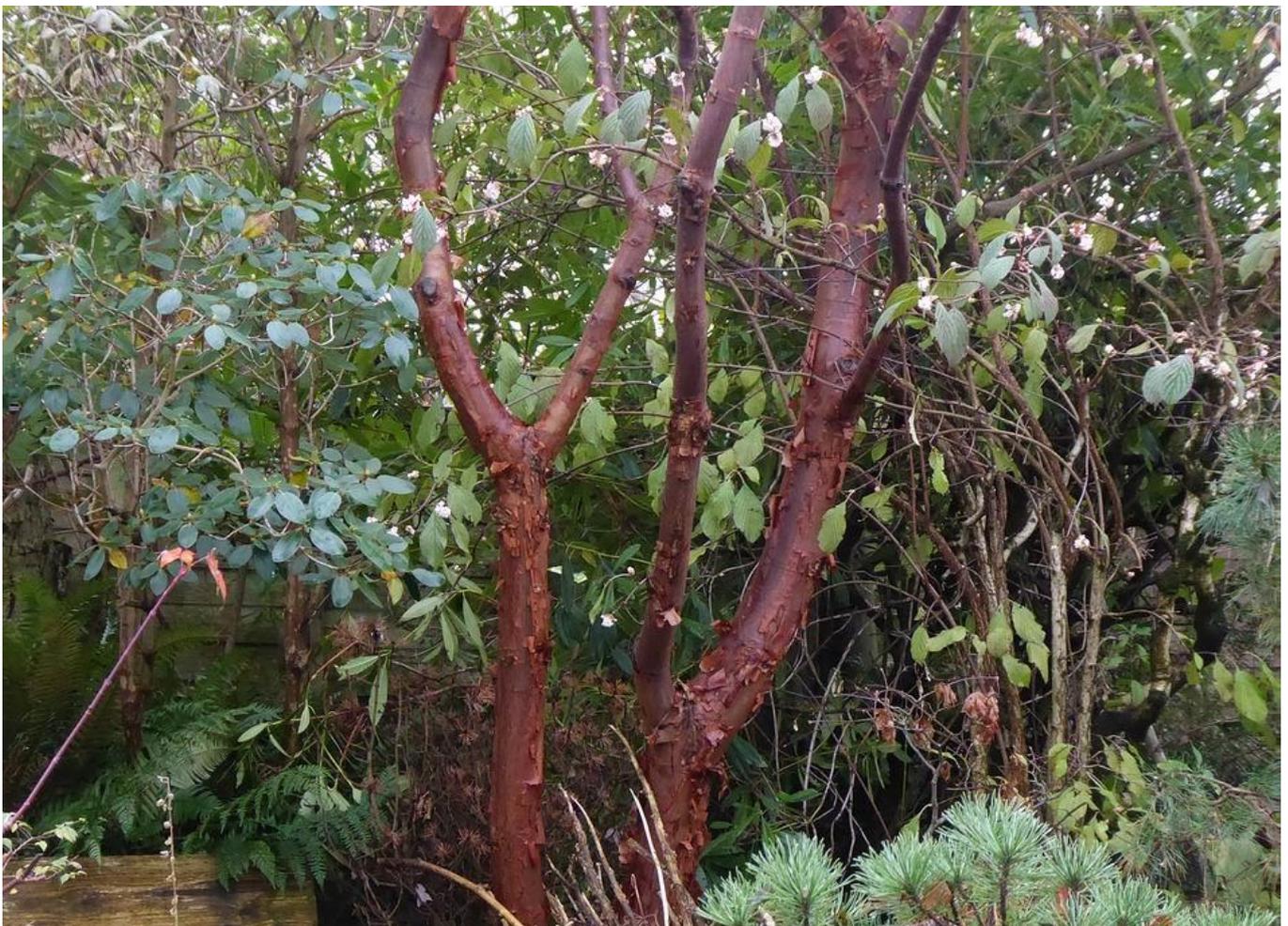




A range of trees and shrubs, deciduous and evergreen, are not only decorative giving structure to an otherwise flat garden they are also a resource providing us with a plentiful supply of leafmould and mulching materials plus they are valuable food sources and habitat for wild life – every garden should have at least one tree.



With the leaf canopy above our heads it is often the decorative bark of the trunks that attract our eye so think about creating multiple trunks by cutting the main stem back when the plants are young as I did with both of these acers .



***Acer griseum***



In spring the emerging leaves of the yellow flowered **Rhododendron lepidostylum** are a stunning glaucous blue green colour with a covering of silver hairs through the season that colour softens then in autumn the two year old leaves turn yellow as they start to shed providing a further striking colourful contrast.



There are still some of the brilliant autumn colours to be found around the base of the trees and shrubs.



The shiny green leaves of an evergreen *Daphne* seedling alongside the collapsed leaves shed from a *Rodgersia*.



Even as one year's herbaceous growth is still in retreat the early signs of a new season are emerging such as these shoots of *Leucojum vernalis*.



The new leaves on some forms of **Narcissus bulbocodium** have also emerged and will withstand all the winter weather.



Some **Allium** leaves also come into growth in autumn; this is the reason they can look less than fresh in spring or summer when the flowers appear because by then the leaves are dying back.

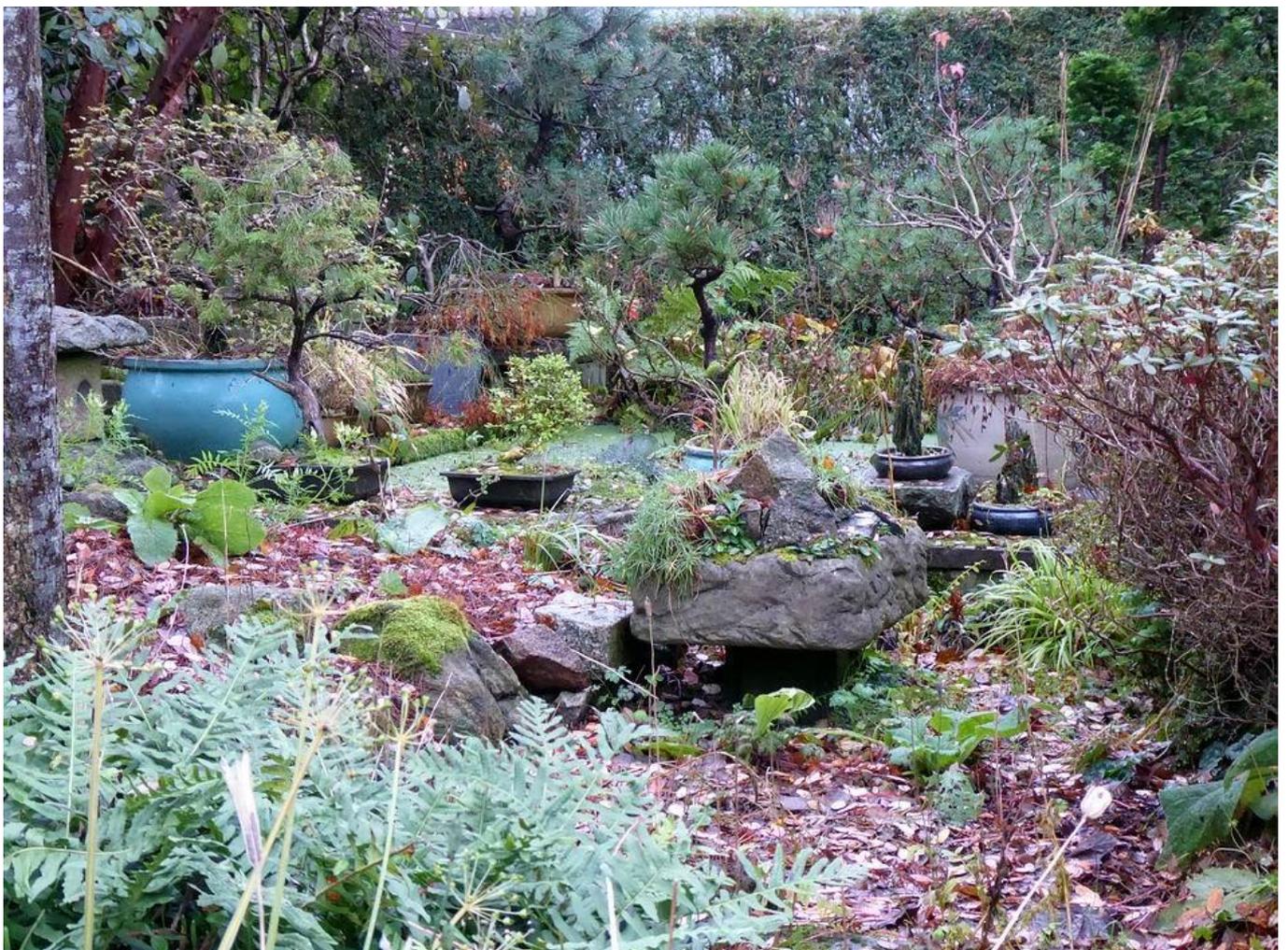


More views of the trees.





There are plenty of large and small trees around the pond.





Even in these dark days as we enter winter the trees stand proud in the garden providing valuable habitat for the birds and other wild life as well as decoration for the gardener.





Over the coming months many of the garden jobs are based around the trees: tidying up the fallen leaves, thinning the canopy, shredding the prunings then spreading the composted shreds back on the beds as a mulch.....